.hack//link
Twilight Knights
Illustration by Megane Kikuya
Story by CyberConnect2

.hack//Link_Orgel und Metronom

.hack//Link_Flügel und Cello

.hack//Link_Klarinette

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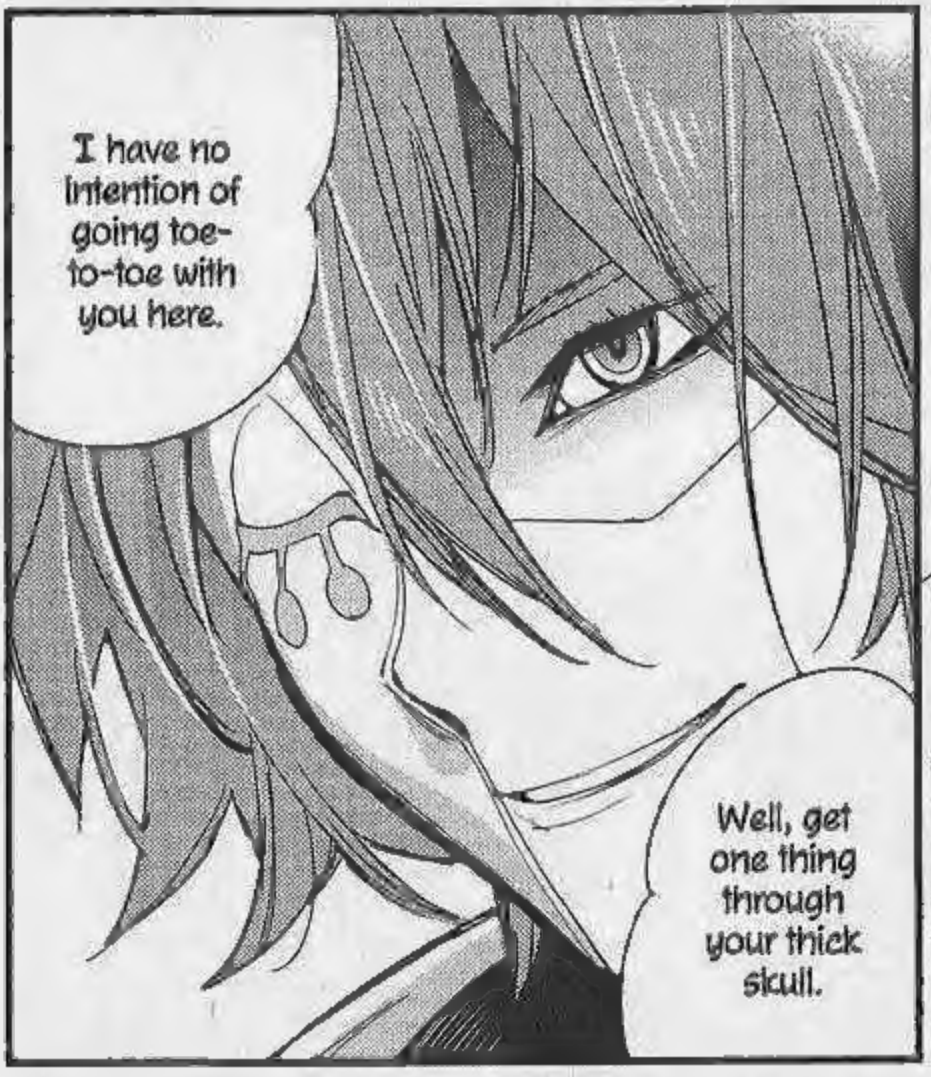
ACCESS 14

It's Geist from Schicksal!
Oh my, no need to look so scared.
I haven't even done anything. (T.T)
That's a lie!

This guy attacked his own friend!


I have no intention of going toe-to-toe with you here.
Well, get one thing through your thick skull.

Tokio Kuryu-kun.
How much do you understand about this world?

Hello there.

But I suppose dressing up can be fun. (^_^)
Too bad you feel you have to hide that pretty face of yours.
So, do you know Tokio from somewhere?
Oh my.. I was just bluffing, but I hit the nail on the head.
I just--
!!
Don't worry. I know how loyal you are to the leader.
But then again...
...!

Tokio-kun.
Everyone has a change of heart now and then, right?
I hope you don't take much longer to rescue the princess.
Hey! Wait!
Good luck.
?!

How does he know about her?
Ja, Ich will be sure to analyze you thoroughly.
Any editing of this Kite Player Character has been restricted.
Und furthermore, Schicksal should have had Kite's PC under strict surveillance.

Have I...
If he hadn't, what would have happened to me?
Back then...he left himself open for a moment
...met you before?
Hey... Who are you?

Ow!

Tokio!
Where are you?!

Ugh . Strength training for a gamer like me is killer.

Getting strong is a lot harder than I thought.
If I'd known this was coming, I would've exercised regularly.
I'm hungry too. I may as well call it a night.
Hey, maybe hugging Shibajiro would be a good idea.
Here boy.
And now I'm cold.
Brr...
Wow! A campfire!

So warm...
Don't blame me if it's poisonous.
Thank you, Master.
It's good.

I trained, day in and day out.
That's all.
How did you get so strong, Master?
Have you always been good at games?
?
Now I'm pumped!
That's right! If I work hard, I'll get stronger!

Is she looking for him?
Is that Shibajiro's mother?
Wh-he...
I'm not helping.
Oh, I see.
Master, take over for me.
Wait just a little longer.
Sorry.

Does your mother know you're here?
What about you?
Maybe you should.
I never told her.
Is this a dream?

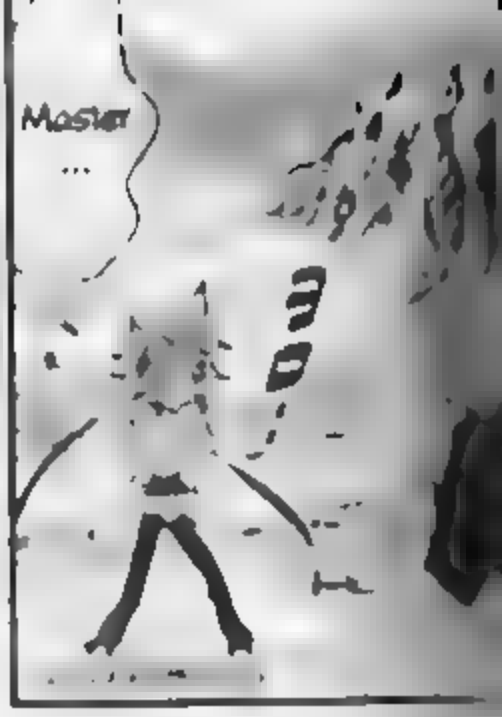
Though she always used to get mad at me.
Mom's crying.
I'm sorry. I...didn't know.
Tokio...
Tokio...
Princess!

I'd get torn to shreds just by the minions at the dungeon gate.
Eh heh heh
I can't save you the way I am now, milady.
You're my hero, after all.
I have faith in you.
I'm sure you'll be able to do it someday.

56
57
58

Dammit ...
At this rate, it'll take years!
Saving Kite is just a pipe dream.
Ow ow ow ouch...
Gaah!
Huh?
We're inside a video game. This should be your forte.
Ouch!
Why?

But right
now you're
as helpless
as a new
born baby


Master
...

Have we met before?
Have we

Everyone has a change of heart now and then.
And...
Pweeek!
Pweek!

.hack//link
ACCESS 15

Master
...
...know you?
Do I...

Ugh!

Where have I met her?
Where?
SLAM
This strength... These movements that leave no room for counterattack... I've seen them before.
Six Months Ago
This can't be happening...I won the national championship!
Wow!!
Tokio won again!

Well, I guess that just means...
...I'm the best in world!
Hee hee.
Next!
Who's man enough to take me on?
Not me! I don't wanna lose all the victory points I've built up.
You took most of them already.
No way!
And you?
You're game, aren't ya?
What about you?
A new challenger appears!

A crack?
What school is she from? She's not
I guess she's a fan who wants to help me take a victory lap!
Your hero, Tokio, will take you on!

Waaah!
GAME
GAME
.....
I can't ...
...believe my eyes!
No way! Tokio...

You Lose
I lost?!
After two rounds, the score was tied one-all.
And then in round three...
...the fight was going my way until...
...she chain-blocked against my special move with inhuman timing...
...and unleashed her one-hit K.O.
The game was hers in a single instant.

Mushi!

月天昇牙

It really is her.
The first person who ever beat me.
My spotless record...
After that...
After you left...
...I never saw you again.

But now here you are!

Phoenix Palm!

...I wanna win!
This time...

You think you can beat me as you are? You?

Now for the coup de grâce.

Press ○○○ consecutively for a combo.
And use A to block.
See? To upper-cut, it's ↑○
× ↓ △ △ to dash and do a sweep kick.
I trained day in and day out.
Now I get it...

This is the repertoire she developed through her training!
Keep doing it until it's engrained into your mind.
But coming up with that on the spot always gets me.
Right, I understand that in theory.
That way...
...your body will move before you even think about it.

Once your opponent's in the air...
to grapple and throw.

Take that!
I have the muscle memory!

I did it!
I did this! Me!
I ...
I taught you?
All thanks to you!
You taught me so much!

Not the path I expected to take, but it'll do.
Shibajiro! Now we can get to the top!
...It looks like I've gotten a little too deeply involved.
"Doing so may only result in making him stronger."
Completely unintentionally...
Get away from her!

Sheesh! Where have you been? I'll have you know that falling off cliffs and into rivers and sprouting mushrooms is hard work!
...
Huh?
Saika!

Saika!
This girl's really strong. It'll be awesome if we can get her to join us!
Could she be jealous?
Stay away from Tekichi!
Oh, calm down!
We're rivals brought together by fate!
Klarinette.
Err... What's your name?

W-w-what did she say?!

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ACCESS 16
BEAUTY PARADE

She's a member of Schicksal?!

Neigh!
B-but she's not like that--

This girl just wants to trick you into letting your guard down so she can destroy you!

?!
Kyaaaaah!!

ガウ
Grrrr!
Aaah!

Neeeigh!

ヒヒーン!
シバジロー!
た
たっ

Lucky Animal: Sleipnir
Sleipnirs are supposed to look cute!
How can this be?

No way... Is that Shibajiro's mom?!

Pweee!
Pweee!

Shibajiro!
I don't believe it.
This is your doing, isn't it?! I knew it all along!

If you name yourself an enemy to Schicksal, then I will fight you with all my soul!
Was she really fooling me this whole time?
!
スチ

Whine...
!! Hey!
Protected Area
Trace Blocked
Dam!
Just forget about it and get out of here!
We're after the Chrono Cores.
Who cares about that?!
Saikal How can I turn this Sleipnir back to normal?
What'll happen to Shibajiro?
Then what about him?

...she was so worried about him, she was crying.
Though his mom may look like this now...
I gave him a name!
No!
Get a clue! They're just data!
H-how did he know?!
Don't be like that! I'm sure you've got a stuffed animal that you named and care about!
Just because you—

I'm in
the space
between
the stars
and birds
Sally

!!!
Buy me some time!
You may be tough, but you're really nice when it comes down to it!
Saika!
How rude!
I've always been an exceedingly compassion-ate human being!

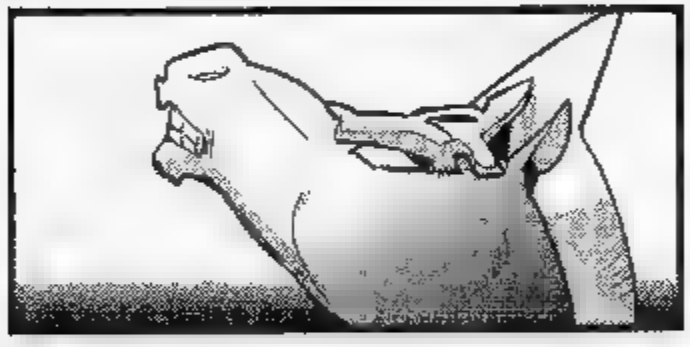
It's just data. You can't see it with your eyes.
There was no visible sign that I'd lost anything.
But all that time and the record of it were erased.
I know what it's like to get your data erased after hours and hours of game time.
Hang in there, Shibajiro.
whimper...
You're my friend.

...stronger now!
I'm...
A to block.
for a high jump.

Tokio's totally different from before.
...?!
Saika! Hurry up!
I know!
This is Shibajiro's mom. I can't use even a weak attack against her.
What should I--
Kick it!

Strange. This voice sounds familiar.
I'll bet that you can return it to its usual state if you take advantage of its weak point.
If you kick that Sleipnir under its chin, it will reverse its lucky special ability.
I noticed last week that this creature seems to be infected with a virus.
?!
Wh- who are you?
Why, I'm a servant of justice!
Tokio?
So I've just got to kick it under its chin, right?

Mwa ha ha. This should make a pretty picture.
Raaaaa!
ポン!
NO
CLICK
ポン!



ガッ

ろう
ソ
ぬい

--
maaya!!

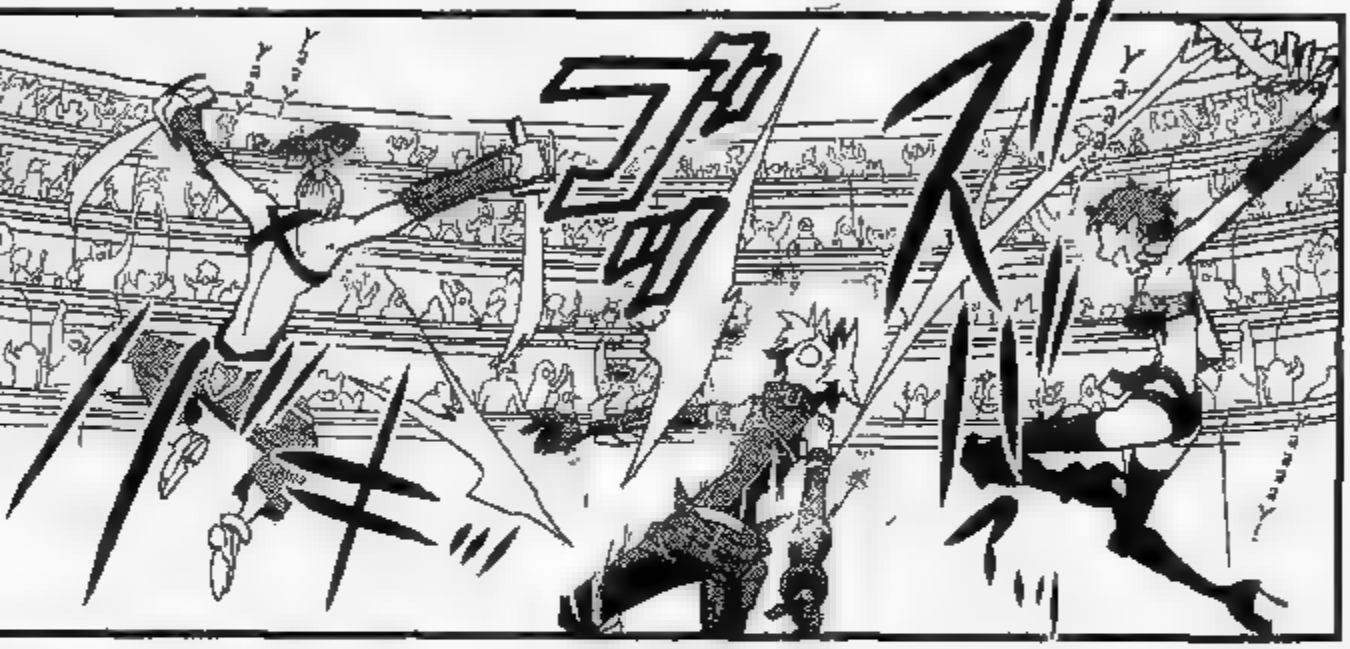
Hoo--

Oops. Guess I slipped.
Wha?
Huh? No way.
But ...
How ?!
.....
This is the guy who was giving me tips?

Wha...
T-Tokio-kun!?
What's going on?
Tokio!

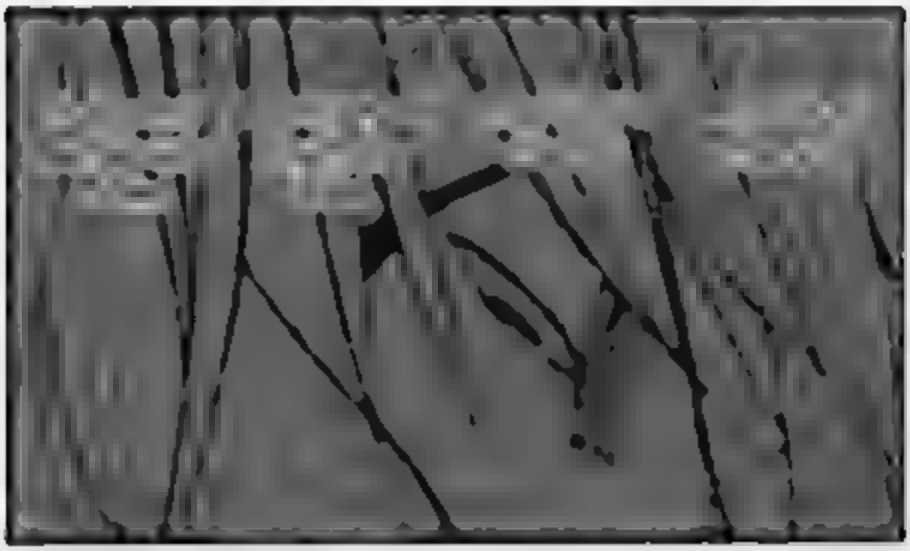
M-How could this be happening, ladies and gentlemen? Our invincible emperor Haseo...
I came to the arena to see him wreak havoc!
What is Haseo doing?
Hey, what gives?
...is taking a fierce thrashing without landing a single blow!!

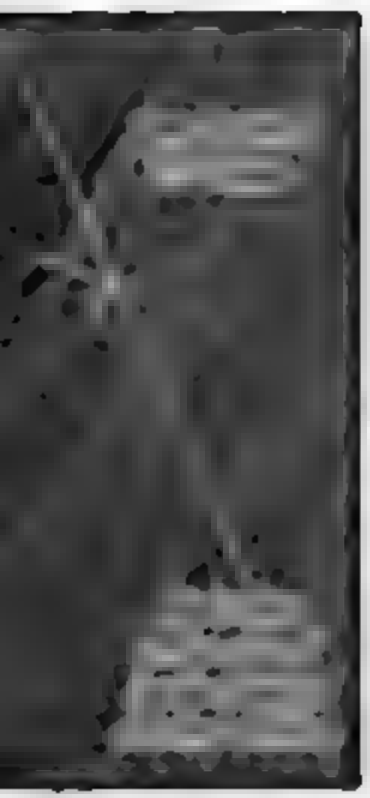
So much for "The Terror of Death," the PKK so ferocious that even crying babies shut up when he's near!
How d'ya like that?


ドカ

It hurts.
I'm in so much pain....
Yaaaaay!
Haseo can't move a muscle!
Gasp!

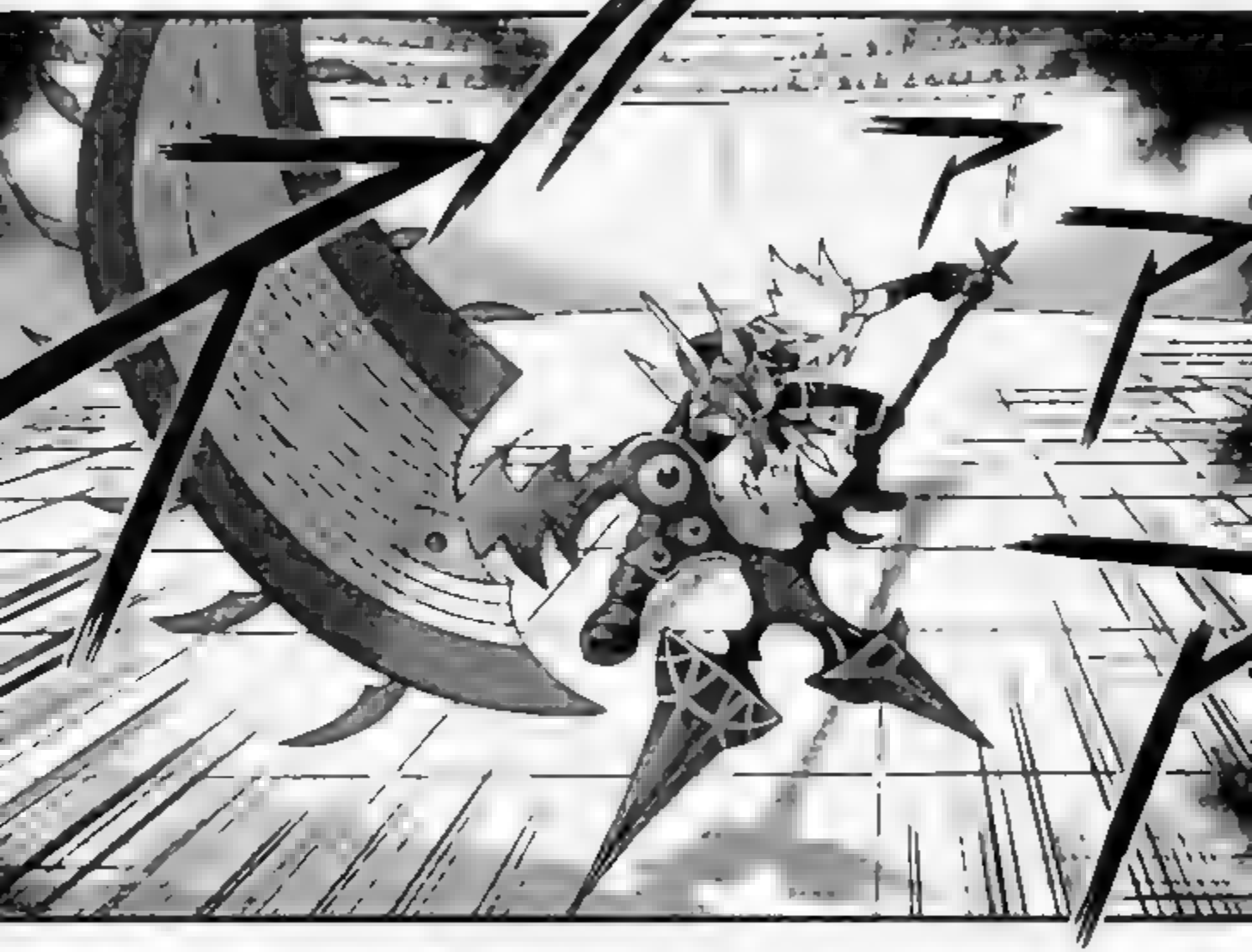
Who
am I?





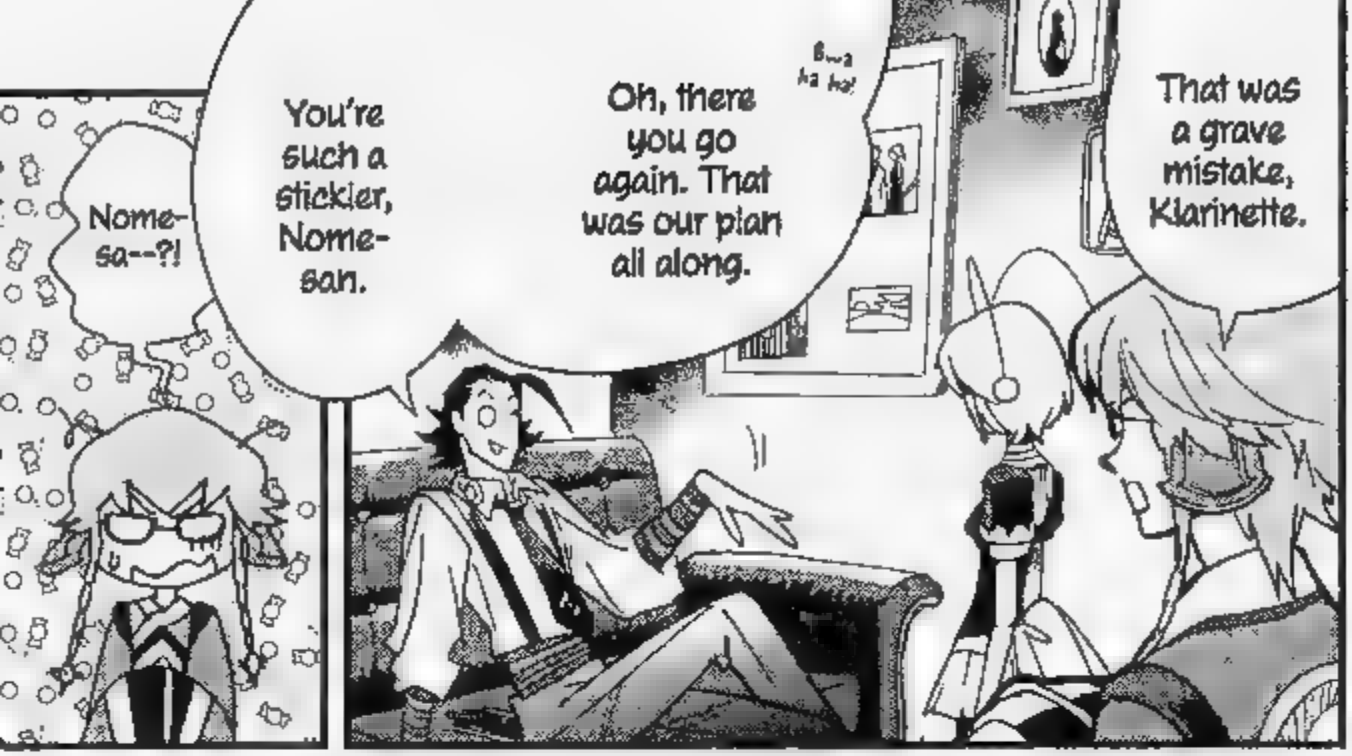
Shino...
Shino is the only thing I want.

Tokio...



Here...
Hurry up and get here, Tokio.

Here I am!
My apologies.
I underestimated Tokio's latent power.


That was a grave mistake, Klarinette.
Bwa ha ha!
Oh, there you go again. That was our plan all along.
You're such a stickler, Nome-san.
Nome-sa--?!

Really, you don't need to worry about it.
No matter how strong Tokio might get...
...I'll defeat him.

Yes.
We've got bigger problems. We've lost contact with Posa-kun.
Just kid-ding.

...but he's always kept in contact before.
The way he does whatever he wants has always concerned me...

Aaah!

I have a bad feeling about this.

.hack//Link

ACCESS 17

When, where, why and how did you get here?!
Tokio-kun!
Well, if it isn't Tokio-kun!

You're always doing this!
Tokio! Where have you been?! I've been looking all over for you!

Just goes to show ya. It's a small world, etc. etc.
Huh. So you know him, Ninjato-san?

Why me loop!
Don't all talk at once!
BEEP
All right.
You first!
Grr.
Tokio had gone missing, so I was looking for him.

Nice to meetcha!
This is my partner, Gaspard.
I'm Silabus, from the newbie-support guild Canard!
That's when I ran into this guy.
...since he keeps his finger on the pulse of The World. That's what led us here.
We didn't think we could find Tokio by ourselves, so I messaged Ninjato...
When we saw Tsukasa in town, he looked like he needed help.
Send
Ninjato's the name. Sparkle! ★
That's right, partners. I'm a walking database to The World.

I've got no interest in mere level-grinding!
I'd staked out the perfect spot for photos and was happily snapping away as usual.
I've taken over a terabyte of screenshots in all the incarnations of The World over the last ten years.
BWA HA HA!
Could you be...
Your voice is so familiar, and your obsession with screenshots of The World...
MISTER!
...POOP
STAB

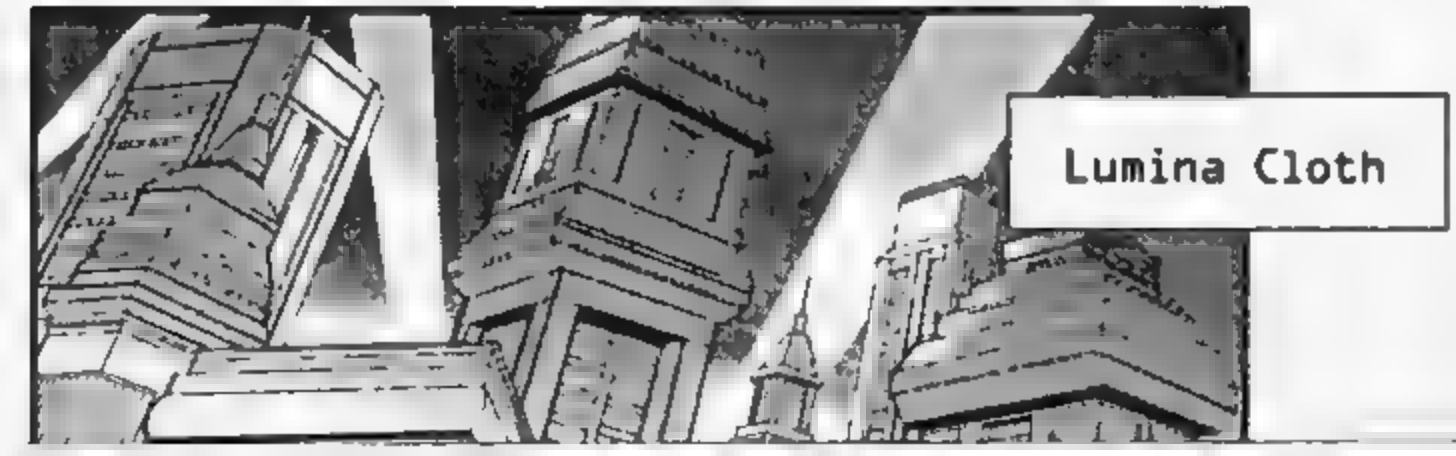
Then you really *are* Tokio-kun!
Yes!
I knew it!
You own the game store I always stop at on the way home from school!
For real!

ｼｬｷｰｱ
Are you hacking? I was wondering why you hadn't stopped by in a while, and here you are cheating online?! Never pegged you for a cheat!
But that's totally weird! Why do you look exactly the same as you do in real life?!

Maybe I'll go take a bath.
Sigh...
And why don't you look more like you do in real life? You faker!
You cheater!
Wait! I can explain!
Are those bunny ears supposed to be cute?
I'm happy for you.

We can no longer gauge him using normal measurements.
...is distorting the confidence limits of our predictions concerning him.
Tokio Kuryu ...
BARK BARK

I think that's wonderful. ♪ (^_^)
But...


Lumina Cloth

Ich have produced many NPCs with propensities for cheating and PKing.
Soon these NPCs will influence the player characters.
You can see the results already, ja?
Waugh!

Humans are all dummköpfe, even more weak-minded than Als.
People in this society are always concerned with obeying authority and conforming to the norm.

...about evil or justice.
I don't give a damn...
Nrgh.

The gruppe defines justice.
Thinking that you're doing the right thing doesn't make it just, ja?

I've been able to gather data exactly as planned.
Soon main Haseo will be complete.
And Tokio as well.
And there you have it.
Don't believe me?
And there's a mysterious organization called Schicksal.
I see. You were inserted bodily into the game.
Ever since The World first launched, there have been all kinds of strange rumors about it.
Of course I do! Every word!
Oww oww! My cheek!

The virtual reality of The World is a heavenly gateway to a higher plane of existence! Will our particles use Ouroboros somehow so that we finally return to the universal consciousness?!
Now we've got proof! It wasn't all just nonsense!
は？
Huh?

BOING
Hmm?
The long-awaited pathway into the unknown! Father Asimov, Laputa really does exist!

We just got through our heart-wrenching farewell!
Take care of yourself!
Shi-bajiro ?!!

Monsters that weren't built into the game.
People who couldn't log out.
Players going comatose one after another.
There are too many first- and second-hand accounts to be just fiction.

You should hurry back to your mo--
キラキラ
なでなでなでなでなでなでなでなで
He's taken quite a liking to you.
Aah!
Tokio!
Guess there's no choice.

Alkaid!

I gotta get me a snapshot of these creatures!
What about it? Afraid he's gone on an alternate path?
WAM!

I appreciate the confidence, but how--?
She's been brain-washed!
I know you can cure her!
Tokio!
Ugh!
But if I can't save Aikaid...

Hmm?
...I can't save Hasso either!
There's some strange static on Alkaid's upper chest!
Tokio-kun!
Goichal
!!

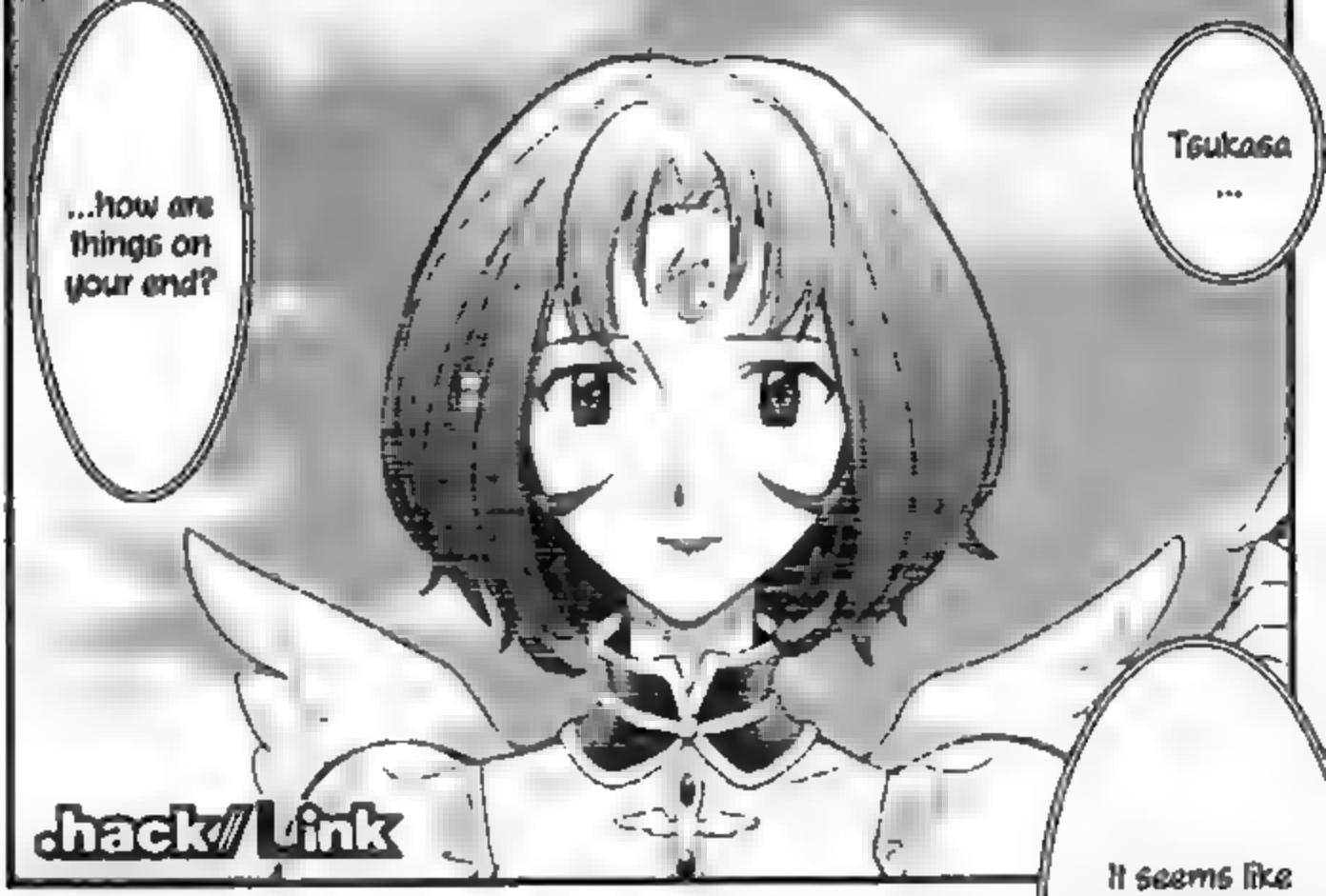
АРЧ

Mein name ist Posaune.
Haseo awaits in the Arena.
Hee hee hee. Impressive job freeing Alkaid's mind. You do indeed merit our leader's taking off his hat to you.
?!
With even more power than before, ja.
Hoo hoo hoo.
Thanks for saving me.

I let myself get manipulated by that bastard...I'll never live down the shame!
Haseo ...
...Is even stronger, huh?
Don't go off half-cocked!
Hey now! You're gonna go beat the snot outta him, aren't ya?
What!

For what it's worth, just now, you looked like a hero to *me*.
There's one thing I was able to glean from that smirker's constant lecturing.
Smirker
The best medicine for Haseo ...
Alkaid ...

Go and show him what for!


...how are things on your end?
Tsukasa ...
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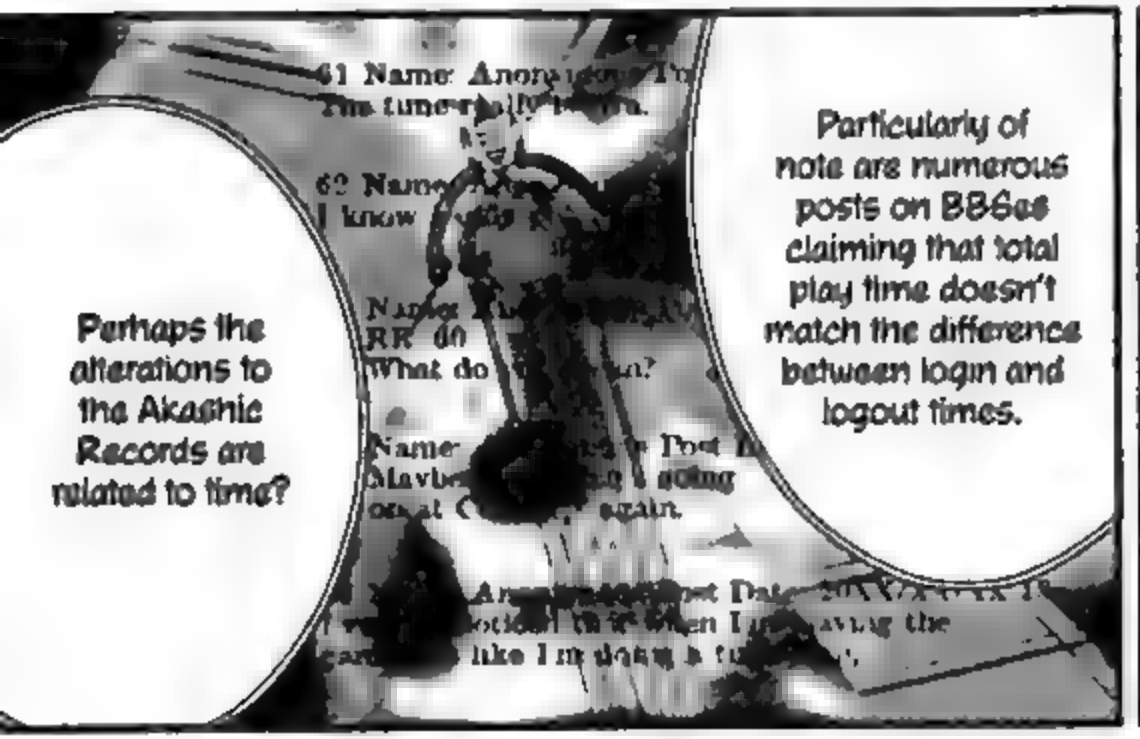

Perhaps the alterations to the Akashic Records are related to time?
Particularly of note are numerous posts on BBSes claiming that total play time doesn't match the difference between login and logout times.

It seems like the changes to The World are finally beginning to show.

As the former leader of the Crimson Knights, I am doing what I can to investigate the cause.
I fear that something more terrifying than ever before may transpire.

"From here on, I pray from the bottom of my heart that nothing happens to you or Tokio."
Raah!
"—Subaru."

.hack//Link
ACCESS 18
Yaay!
It's finally time for the showdown with Haseo!
Wow!
So this is the waiting room for the competitors?

It's really starting to feel like we're doing it...
Badum
Badum
Badum
Haseo is victorious yet again!
He's fighting as if his lapse yesterday never happened!

Wow! I'm amazing! Even though I suck at school!
Perfect!

Let's begin the Fighting Commands Dictation Test!
A-all right! Time for a warmup!

Huh?
No! What do you mean by "that attack"? I'm scared!
It's pointless without a sparring partner.
Pops, come with me a bit.

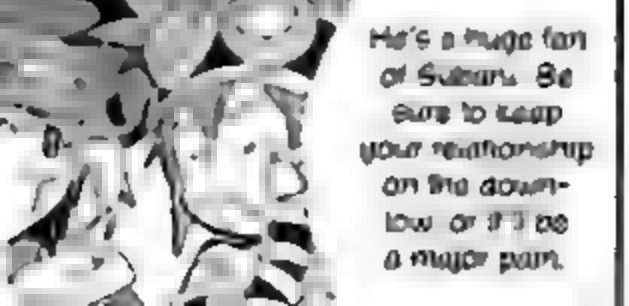
What about that attack ...?
Oh, I know!

Tokio ...
Sigh...
I don't know what I'd say to Subaru-san if anything ever happened to you.
トン
Tsu-ka-sa!
Got a message from Subaru-san? You two are as close as ever, I see.
Now, I have my Guardian again.
And the Chrono Core inside this player character lends me power.
THE WORLD
The World has really changed me.
It was because The World exists that I was able to meet Subaru.
She helped me so much.

I've been given a mission.
With this power comes the responsibility to protect The World.

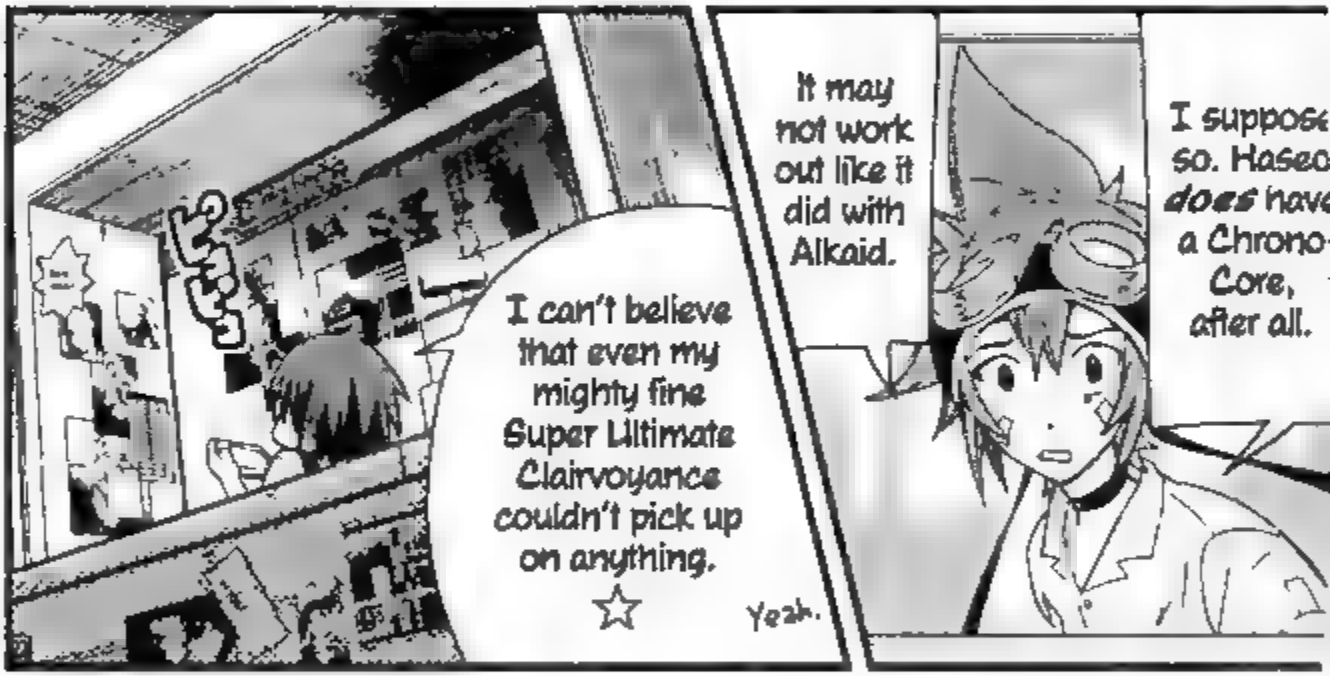
Tsukasa...

Hey, hey! Did you just say "Subaru"?


He's a huge fan of Subaru. Be sure to keep your relationship on the down-low or it'll be a major pain.

Strange as that may seem.
And I think that if I join forces with you, we'll be able to make it through this.

I thought I might be able to figure something out by looking at screenshots of Haseo, but no luck.
SUBARU
GAIN


I can't believe that even my mighty fine Super Ultimate Clairvoyance couldn't pick up on anything.
Yeah.
It may not work out like it did with Alkaid.
I suppose so. Haseo *does* have a Chrono Core, after all.

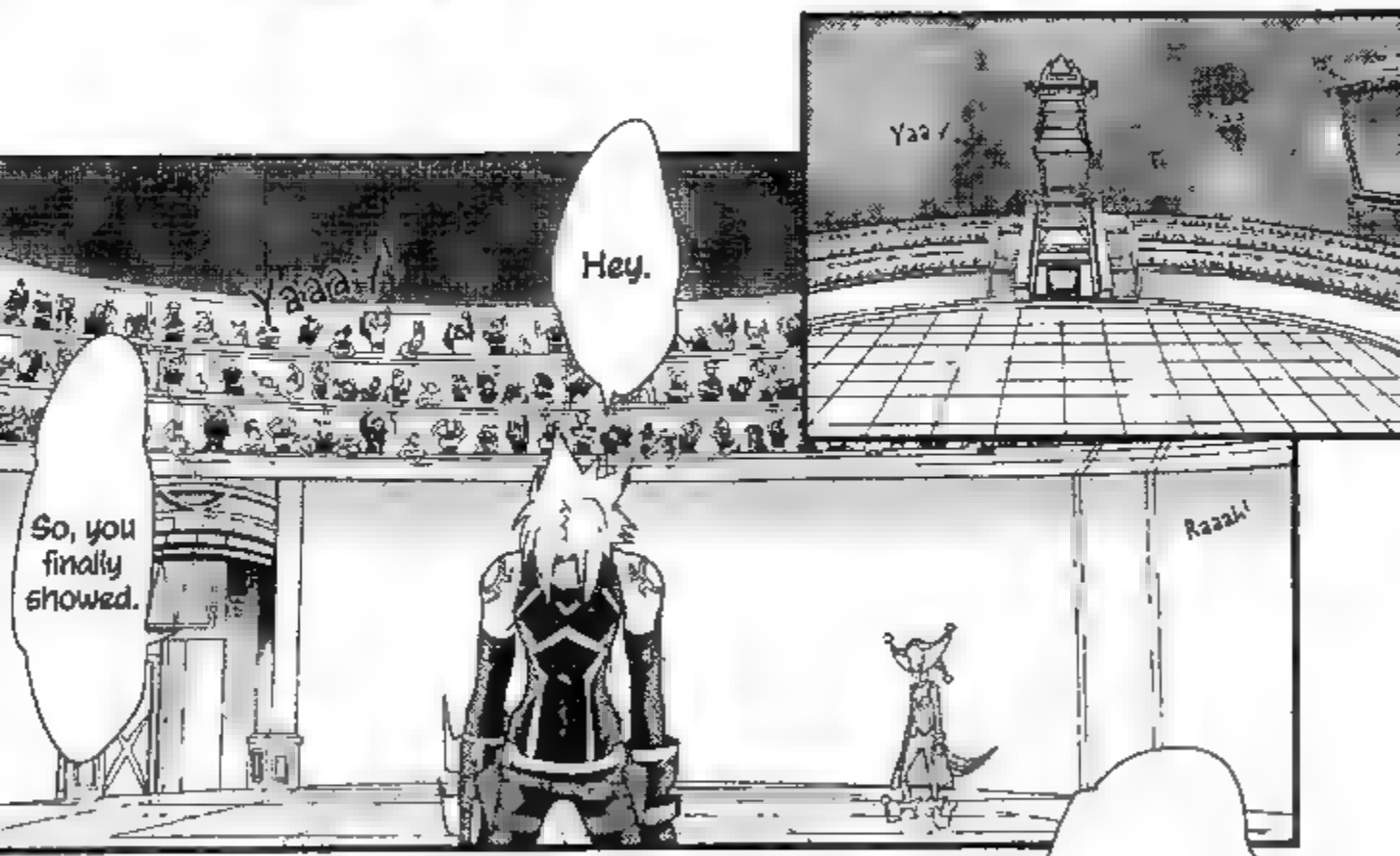
Don't tell me you're working again, Papi?
Dwah! Welcome!

Excuse me...
That's Haseo, "The Terror of Death" for ya!

You understand, don't you? You're gonna teach that delinquent a lesson and make him listen to reason.
And get his Chrono Core.
Tokio!
It's me!
Ack! Outta nowhere!
Tokio
...
...I have faith in you. That's all I have left.

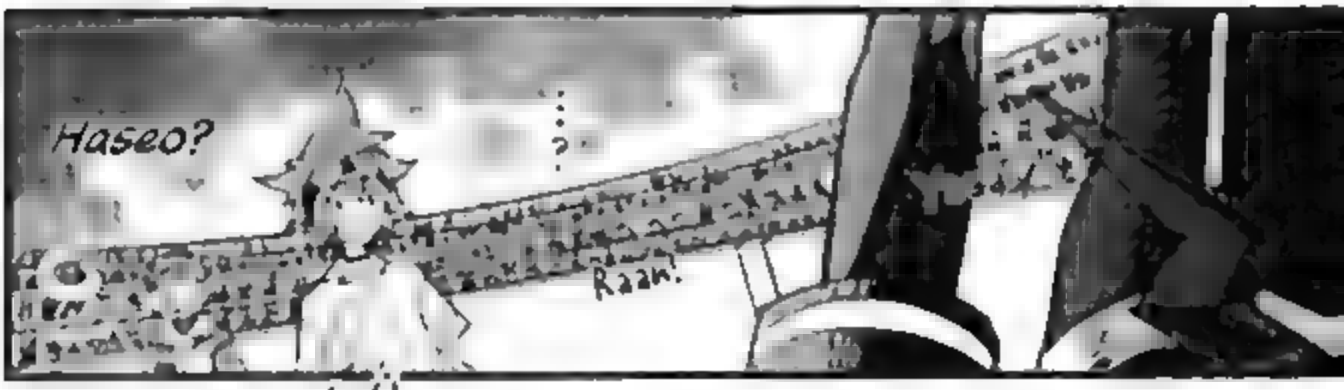
They're all depending on me.
Saika.
Kite.
Alkaid.
Tsukasa.
Well, that just means I can't let 'em down.
...I'll deliver his much-needed punch to the face.
Time to wake up, Haseo!
With this fist...

Best seller!!
Pre-order now!
GAME


Yaa!
Yaaa!
Hey.
So, you finally showed.
Raaa!

I've been waiting, Tokio.
Yaay!
Heeo~!

I feel like ripping off your arms and legs and using them to beat you to a pulp.
!!!
Heh heh heh ...


Haseo?
...?
Raah!

Aaah!

Haseo was antagonistic last time, but he was driven by the strong desire to save his friend
Ha ha ha ha ha ha!
...has he completely lost it?!
Break!
Break!
I'll beat this place to the ground!
Let's get this party started!!

Let the battle begin!!

I hit him!

Now we've finally got something, folks!
This is the matchup that our Emperor Masao's been dreaming of!

And who'da thought that Tokio would be the one to land the first blow?!
Team Haseo and Posaune against Team Tokio and its mysterious eponymous newcomer!
What's this?!
Yaay!
Haseo!
What's about to unfold, ladies and gentlemen? We can only imagine!
A strange object floats behind him.
Team Tokio's Wavemaster, Tsukasa, attacks!
What in The World could it be?!

That golden monster again? Don't have any other tricks up your sleeve?
You remembered? I'll teach you never to forget it!
Tsukasa goes down after facing off against Haseo!

Takio!

What is Takio-kun doing?!

Bassaiken Reverse Lasso from Karate master Hwoarang's student Jing Xi! From the lightning Quake Lesson 1!

You can trigger it once your K.I. gauge has filled up and you use the eight Buttons to complete sixteen patterns

When inputting the 64 commands you're only allowed to move up down left and right

But...

...once it's mastered, even a dire situation

Here's my...
...can turn into victory !!
... special attack!

Raaaaaah!

Tokio certainly has gotten stronger and all...
I-I can't believe what I'm seeing, folks. Tokio used a massive blast to send our Haseo flying!
Subaru...
...but is Haseo even trying?
...We can win this!

Haseo!
Tear that runt to shreds!
Haseo, knock Tokio dead!
Hee hee hee...
Haseo!
An appeal to our Emperor's dignity? The crowd is calling Haseo back to the ring!
Ha-se-o!
Ha-se-o!
Ha-se-o!
Ich must give you mein thanks, Tokio.
Because of you, the time for Haseo's awakening has finally come.
Bwa ha ha!
Now ist the moment of Haseo's perfection!
Rrraaaaaash!
W-what did you say?
Ha-se-o!!
Ha-se-o!!
Ha-se-o!!

Haseo...
B-st Form!!

W-what's this turn of events, ladies and gentleman?! Haseo...
It's like he's transformed into some kind of monster!
Graaah!

TSUKASSSS!

Oh well. I'm tired anyway.
Where are the customers? It's so dead in here.
Hmm...
BURGER